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# Economic and Social Council

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**Commission for Social Development**
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Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda*
**Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: priority theme: review of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (1997-2006)**

## Statement submitted by VIVAT International, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

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**Statement**

In December 1995, the General Assembly proclaimed the First United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (1997-2006). In December 1996, the General Assembly declared that the theme for the Decade as a whole would be that eradicating poverty was an ethical, social, political and economic imperative of humankind.

The Millennium Development Goals, carved out of the many resolutions and commitments made at earlier Conferences, Summits, and Special Sessions of the General Assembly, were broadly aimed at reducing poverty all over the world.

In spite of all the efforts and commitments of the International community, the Government Agencies, and the NGOs poverty in its many faces continues to remain the main problem all over the globe. Least Developed Countries in Africa continue to have the highest proportion of people living in extreme poverty. Women and children remain the most vulnerable to the effects of war, disease, illiteracy, lack of access to credit or job opportunities and often end up in being victims of human trafficking.

The Report of the Secretary General (A/60/314) entitled "The centrality of employment to poverty eradication" submitted to the Sixtieth session of the General Assembly argues that employment is the missing link in the growth and poverty reduction equation.

In this context, it is heartening to note that the 44th Session of the Commission for Social Development has taken the priority theme as: Review of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (1997-2006).

VIVAT International (VIVAT) has attempted to focus on people-centered development by empowerment and capacity building programs, especially for women and indigenous people. VIVAT assists the poor and the marginalized, especially women and youth, to overcome poverty by creating job opportunities through Microcredit and Technology. VIVAT strives to empower the victims of human trafficking and persons infected and/or affected by HIV/AIDS.

**Some Success Stories of VIVAT Members in Reducing Poverty**

1. **'AKAP International'**, Benguet, Philippines in collaboration with the local government and other agencies, has given various trainings, including social development and livelihood trainings to 28 Cooperatives of vegetable farmers (indigenous population), which has created 3000 job opportunities for the farmers in Benguet. The Farmers have significantly increased their annual income by federating themselves and marketing their produce directly. This enabled them to raise their standard of living and to provide for their children nutritious food and quality education.

2. **The Sandiwaan Center for Learning's** e-Learning Project at Smokey Mountain, Santa Mesa, Manila, is a creative step to help out-of-school youths in partnership with the Department of Education's Bureau of Alternative Learning Systems towards passing an equivalency test for their

high school diploma. According to Polytechnic University of the Philippines, 73% of the students of e-learning have got jobs.

3. In 'Droga', Nysa in Poland, in collaboration with local authorities, VIVAT members are helping the children and unemployed youth affected by poverty, drug abuse, homelessness, and broken homes. These issues are addressed by providing education and employment opportunities and leadership trainings.

4. VIVAT members in Sao Paulo, Palmoplis, Vale do Jequetinhonh, Minas Gerais and Aparecida do Rio Negro in Brazil are striving to promote human life of those excluded by the society, namely, the street people, unemployed, victims of human trafficking and those living in extreme poverty. VIVAT members endeavor to reintegrate these people into the mainstream by offering technical and educational facilities and assist them to find alternatives to the situation in which they find themselves.

**Recommendations**

As armed conflict in many African and other countries are the main cause of slow development and poverty, we urge the United Nations and the international community to take steps to stop the armed conflicts and prevent the sale of arms to these countries.

The Doha round has to be put into effect by allowing a significant share in the world trade to the African countries. The countries of the North need to open their markets to the products of African countries such as coffee, cotton, palm oil etc., and thus allow them to join the globalized economy. The international community must support African efforts to increase agricultural productivity.

VIVAT Members appeal to the governments of developing countries to deliver on the promise to create more jobs, address the health needs of the people and lower the price of medicine.

The local governments need to address the problem of poverty by providing more educational facilities for children, especially girls, and job opportunities to the youth and women, in collaboration with NGOs, as we believe that education and dignified work alternatives to eradicate poverty are long-term goals on the ground.

VIVAT truly believes that if the Governments have the political will, most poor people will be able to rise above the poverty line. The key to the success is education for all and job opportunities to the marginalized. Transparency and accountability from the part of the Government in regard to the execution of pro-poor programs and the collaboration of the Government and the Civil Society will go a long way in empowering the poor and making them self reliant.